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SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

January 5, 2022

Happy New Year

by Rev. Kim Wood, Conference Minister

"Look, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth—can't you see it? I'm making a road in the desert and setting rivers to flow in the wasteland." (Isaiah 43:19, The Inclusive Bible)

I love the word "new!" Not because it points to flashy things – although that can be a draw. And not because it is used to oppose the word "old" – although it often is. I like the word "new" because it introduces possibilities, invites transformation, and encourages hope.



As a local church pastor, it was common for me to promote opportunities to try something new: a new song in worship, a new community partnership, a new way to use our space. In fact, on congregation I served became so used to my requests that they move outside their comfort zones and think outside the box that, when I opened with the words "let's try," they would exuberantly respond "SOMETHING NEW!" Soon, they were initiating trying new things themselves, and it was exciting to see what emerged.

The thing is, there is no new without old or established, current or present. New can be about learning from and building on what has been, improving what is, or imagining what can be. U.S Attorney General (1993-2001) Janet Reno's family had a motto they lived by: "Don't ever rest until good is better and better is best." Such wisdom resists the stagnation that is fostered by when we hunker down in our comfort zones and miss, or worse yet ignore

what God has in store for us. “Look, I am doing something new! Can’t you see it?”

Even more disconcerting is when we are holding so tightly onto the past that we fail to address the world today and God’s call for us to serve God by serving others in it. Phrases such as “we’ve always done it this way” and “we can’t try that – it might not work” leave us white knuckled as we try to either re-create what used to be or avoid mistakes at any cost, including not doing anything at all.

Our history, both the fruitful yields and the tragedies, offers fertile ground for growing and gleaning. Our future summons us to constantly move forward to seek the way of Christ and ask, “What next?” But the present, our here and now, with its struggles and promise, its vast expanses and stark realities, prompt us to try new things, look with new and clearer eyes, step into God’s transformative love.

Theologian Robert H. Schuller said, “There will never be another now – I’ll make the most of today. There will never be another me – I’ll make the most of myself.” God’s new thing is springing forth. Can you see it? There are roads in the desert, rivers flowing through the wasteland, paths in the wilderness all prepared by God that we might see our way forward to transform, renew, and serve. Can you imagine what might happen if we all see God’s new thing for us? Let’s try...

Response: SOMETHING NEW!

News from the Conference Office



A Special Edition of Conversations on Opening

Buildings

Monday, January 10 at 7:00 PM Eastern / 6:00 PM Central

Michael Bowen, MSN, who is a nurse on staff at the University of Alabama Birmingham Hospital, will join us to talk about the most recent surge in Covid-19 cases and hospitalizations, the Omicron variant, and other Covid-19 information as we strive to follow best safe practices in our various ministry settings.

Who should attend:

- Church Council/Board presidents and moderators
- Covid-19 Task Force leaders
- Clergy
- Church staff
- Anyone who would like to learn more and share information with leadership and staff

Register for this Zoom gathering at

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMpcumrqT0pHdKRF6f5pFyGT5dPOYgaGD5_

2021 OCWM and Christmas Offering

Our Church's Wider Mission and Special Offerings (Including the Christmas Fund) must be received by January 10, 2022, in order to be counted towards your church's 2021 totals. We cannot adjust this deadline because the Conference has to report totals to the National Setting. Any checks or online gifts received after Jan 10 will be added to 2022 totals for your church. Checks can be mailed to the Conference at PO Box 1950, Decatur GA 30031 or you can give through our website. If writing a check, please be sure to make the check payable to the Southeast Conference with the fund it is for in the memo line. If donating online for your church, please be sure to list your church's name as the donor so we can attribute it correctly.

Church Yearbook Reporting

It is that time of year again!!! Church Yearbook reporting instructions will be sent by email directly to your church on Thursday of this week. If your church has changed its contact email or if you do not receive an email by Friday morning, please email Heather at hfosburgh@secucc.org.

New Year Blessings

by Min. Carrole Moss, Generosity Coordinator

Greetings and blessings as we enter 2022.

Praying that 2021 ended on a great note and we are looking forward to NEW and MORE in 2022!! New blessings, new opportunities, More love, more Grace, more joy, and more faith.

GOD has brought us thru MORE storms in 2021 and by GOD'S Grace and mercy, we are still standing!! PRAISE GOD for continued healing and faith renewed!

Romans 8: 28 teaches: "All things work together for good to and for those who love GOD and are called according to GOD'S purpose." We know that suffering produces perseverance, character, and hope. We, the Southeast Conference United Church of Christ are grateful for ALL the ways that you continue to love and support this conference.

GENTLE REMINDER: The books for your 2021 giving will close on January 12, 2022. Please make sure that your contributions reach the office before that date in order to be credited for 2021. Should you have questions, or if I may be of assistance to you and your Congregation, please feel free to reach out to me directly.

I look forward to being in community with ALL of you in 2022!! Love, peace, and blessings, AS WE CONTINUE TO JOURNEY....



A Time for Prayer

Friday, January 7 at 9:45 AM Eastern/8:45 AM Central Time

Please join us for a time of prayer on Thursday, January 7 as the sentencing hearing for Ahmaud Arbery's killers begins.

Judge Timothy R. Walmsley has set the sentencing hearing for Travis McMichael, Gregory McMichael, and William "Roddie" Bryan, the men found guilty of murdering 25-year-old Ahmaud Arbery. Arbery, a Black man, was jogging through the neighborhood where the three white men reside on Sunday, Feb. 23, 2020, when he was shot and killed. The McMichaels and Bryan were convicted on Nov. 24, 2021, in Glynn County, GA. The hearing is set to begin this Thursday, January 7 at 10 AM Eastern time.

If you would like to join a Conference-wide virtual gathering, register in advance [here](#). After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. The Zoom space will open at 9:30 ET/ 8:30 CT for quiet reflection and meditation, and Rev. Kim Wood will offer a prayer beginning at 9:45 ET/8:45 CT.

We encourage those people who are not able or would prefer not to join the virtual gathering to stop for prayer time wherever you might be. Additionally, some ministry settings, congregations, work or small groups may choose to take time to pray together.

Whether gathered or scattered, may we prepare for both the accountability so necessary to live in community together and the restorative justice that is nothing short of required for us to live as God has called us to live.



SECUCC Disaster Response: Tornadoes and Floods

While the weeks both before and after Christmas brought a slow-down to the disaster response efforts to the tornadoes that took place across the Southern and Midwest Regions, as well as to the ongoing response to the floods in and around Waverly earlier in 2021, requests are now beginning to come in for specific assistance and volunteer requests.

At a recent Tennessee VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) virtual meeting, we were alerted to the fact that 19 counties in Tennessee sustained levels of damage extensive enough to receive a Presidential Disaster Declaration. In preparation to the recovery needs that are now emerging, we are asking the following:

1. If you are willing to be part of a volunteer team to help with recovery efforts, please send an email to kwood@secucc.org. Please include skill levels and general availability information for the next several months, if possible. Current needs include chainsaw and debris removal crews, and we anticipate other needs for clean-up and repair will follow.
2. If your congregations has been assisting church and community members who were impacted by the storms (food, shelter, supplies, financial, etc.), please send an email to the same address with information that we can share with VOAD. This data is important to getting funding and supplies to assist people.
3. Please continue to give to the SECUCC Disaster Ministry Fund. As dollars are needed in the response and recovery efforts, we hope to

- be able to assist in significant ways.
4. Pray for the families, communities, organizations, and workers who have been impacted and/or are sharing time, talent, and treasure to help.

Thank you for all the ways you are reaching out to care for those people for whom the realities of these storms has been so devastating.

Communities of Practice: A Program for Clergy

For Specialized Ministers and Local Church Pastors, these covenantal groups provide support and accountability, while encouraging good habits and professional growth. Small groups (5-6) led by a trained facilitator provide a place to share resources, experiences, and encouragement in a confidential setting.

Whether you are new to ministry, new to the UCC, or have years of experience, these groups are for you! The testimonies of those involved in Communities of Practice continue to praise the impact that groups have had on the personal and professional life of ministers. "Inspirational sessions with Worship, Prayer and Fellowship... this is a time we 'unpack our baggage' of the clutter, as we invite Holy Spirit to fill the sacred space." COP participant Dorinda Broadnax

For more information about Communities of Practice, see this [article on our website](#) or contact Cindy Bovee-Kemper at COPfacilitator@secucc.org with questions or to sign up.

Clergy Zoom Connections for January

- **An Hour of Conversations and Prayer**
Tuesday, January 11, 18, 25 - 11:00 a.m. Eastern (10:00 a.m. Central); Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/479440102>
- **Live Harp Meditations for Ministers**
Thursday, January 20 - 12:00 p.m. Eastern (11:00 Central)
20 minutes of meditation with Celtic harp. Silent prayer and reflection following if desired, facilitated by Rev. Jean Norton. (For questions or to sign up for individual Therapeutic Harp Sessions, contact Jean at HeartSongJean@gmail.com.)
Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/96976838422>
- **Especially for Specialized Ministers**
Tuesday, January 25, 2021 - 9:30 a.m. Eastern (8:30 a.m. Central)

Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/354744689>



Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2022. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

Week of January 2

- Bethany Congregational UCC; Thomasville, Georgia
- Donna Farrar
- Dale Marshall
- Kim Sorrells
- C. George

Week of January 9

- Victory for the World Church; Stone Mountain, Georgia
- Winter Youth Retreat at Blowing Rock Conference Center
- Susie Smith
- Andrew Young
- Jerry Gladson
- Steven P. Miller

Churches in Transition

First Congregational, Montgomery AL; First Congregational, Savannah GA; Trinity Congregational, Athens AL; Rush Memorial, Atlanta GA; Holy Trinity

Community Church, Nashville TN; First United Church, Belvidere TN; Pleasant Hill Community Church, Pleasant Hill TN; Peace Congregational, Clemson SC; Deer Lodge Congregational Church, Deer Lodge TN

News from the Wider Church



Cultivating Generous Congregations

The Cultivating Generous Congregations Seminar for pastors and lay leaders offers an opportunity to explore faithful, practical, and tested ways to promoting generosity in our congregations. The seminar draws on current research, seeks guidance from the wisdom of scripture, and discusses the best practices in church-based fundraising. Class sessions held on six Thursdays between Feb. 24 – May 12 from 7:00 – 8:30pm Eastern Time. Between class sessions, the instructors provide materials to help you analyze the culture of your own congregation and learn how to create change. Register today: The CGC Seminar is \$300 for a team of two leaders. Register here by February 10, 2022: <https://cvent.me/qvwRM3>.

Credit Union Survey by the Pension Boards

A 2017 General Synod Resolution identified a non-profit, member-owned credit union as a way to provide vital financial benefits to the UCC community, and to advance justice for many who need access to the products and services a credit union can provide.

The Pension Boards of the UCC has undertaken the challenge to create a credit union for UCC clergy, lay church workers, and local church members across the denomination. As part of the regulatory process to obtain a

credit union charter from the National Credit Union Association (NCUA), a critical step is a survey to measure interest from potential credit union members like YOU.

[Please answer the 10-minute survey now by clicking this link.](#)

Trainings and Conferences



BRCC Winter Youth Retreat~ January 14-17, 2022

With continued COVID-19 mitigation efforts, the efforts of our churches, and the staff at the Blowing Rock Conference Center, we are pleased to announce that we will be holding WYR 2022. This year's theme and conversations will be focusing on our relationship with the earth and how God calls for us to care for all creation.

All registrations after December 1, 2021 are \$200.00. We look forward to seeing you on the mountain. <https://www.uccwinteryouthretreat.org/>

Conference Calendar

January 10 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EST

[Special Edition of Conversations on Opening Buildings](#)

January 11 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST

[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

January 13 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EST

[Board of Directors Meeting](#)

January 14 - January 17

[Winter Youth Retreat](#)

January 18 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST

[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

January 20 @ 12:00 pm - 12:30 pm EST

[Live Harp Meditations for Ministers](#)

January 24 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EST

[Re-Opening of Churches – Conversation for all Church Leaders](#)

January 25 @ 9:30 am - 11:00 am EST

[Zoom Conversation for Specialized Ministers](#)

January 25 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST

[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

View the **full calendar** of events online: <https://www.secucc.org/events/>

Contact Us

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